

OCT 22 1996

The Baptist Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

Thursday, October 17, 1996

Published Since 1877

Southern Baptist resolution, others' opposition to tobacco use puts farmers in difficult position

By Darrell Turner

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP) — In the ongoing controversy between the federal government and the tobacco industry, tobacco farmers often have been the forgotten people.

The Christian Life Commission (CLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention, which has disagreed with the Clinton administration on a slew of issues, solidly backs its campaign against tobacco use by young people.

At the same time, a substantial number of Southern Baptist tobacco farmers find their livelihoods potentially being encroached upon by the growing number of legal restrictions on their product.

"I know many fine Christian folks, Baptists and others, who are engaged in the tobacco industry," said Maurice Cook, professor emeritus of soils at North Carolina State University at Raleigh and an environmental consultant.

Cook, who is also a past president of North Carolina Baptist Men and active in the Fellowship of Christian Farmers International, said tobacco farming "is a way of life, and I think it's hard for one who has not been brought up along tobacco road to really understand the importance of the crop and what it means, not only for their livelihood but to the way of life they know."

Thad Sharp, a third-generation tobacco farmer in Sims, N.C., agreed. "We have been forgotten," he said. "We are hard-working, law-abiding and in a lot of cases Christian people that are producing this tobacco. It is a source of livelihood for the building of many churches, building of many schools, building of many towns and hospitals."

Sharp, a Southern Baptist, said he agrees smoking is unhealthy and favors the abolition of tobacco advertising directed at teenagers.

At the same time, he said, "I have no problems with the ethics of growing tobacco, because it has done so much good for so many people" economically.

What he does have a problem with, he said, is "with somebody telling me that somewhere down the road I can't grow it."

Messengers to the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Kansas City, Mo., passed a resolution encouraging denominational agencies to campaign against the use of tobacco in any form and urging Southern Baptists who grow tobacco "to cease such agriculture and, where feasible, to switch to another cash crop in order to make such products less accessible."

Four years later, messengers to the SBC annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas, called on the U.S. government to stop assisting the tobacco industry through trade talks and urged Baptists to declare their opposition to the practice.

National conventions have not adopted any anti-tobacco resolutions during the 1990s, but the CLC has supported Clinton and the Food and Drug Administration in adopting policies designed to block the sale and marketing of tobacco products to American children under 18 years of age.

A CLC pamphlet on smoking declares, "Christians have a responsibility to abstain from its use, to encourage others to abstain and to do everything in their power to end the tobacco menace."

"We believe that tobacco is a drug and that it should be regulated," said Ben Mitchell, visiting professor of ethics at Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and biomedical and life issues consultant with the Nashville, Tenn.-based CLC. He said the

commission has urged Washington to follow the Canadian model of putting high taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products and using the revenues for research on tobacco-related illnesses.

Mitchell said the situation of the tobacco farmer is "a real dilemma" because producing another cash crop might not be as financially lucrative.

At the same time, he said, "if the farmer were really convinced that this is a moral issue, that they were causing harm not only to individuals by producing tobacco but also to the cost of health care, they might be able to look more energetically to alternatives."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says smoking costs the U.S. economy at least \$50 billion annually in direct medical expenses and that nearly half the cost is borne through the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

In announcing federal rules against marketing of tobacco products to children in August, President Clinton said more Americans die every year from smoking-related diseases than from AIDS, car accidents, murders, suicides, and fires combined.

Sharp said reports of addiction to smoking don't convince him because smokers are forced to stop for a week or more when they are in the hospital. "It is a submission to weakness, and you should overcome your weakness," he said. The 65-year-old farmer said he quit smoking two or three times in his life and hasn't smoked for more than 10 years.

Sharp, his son and grandson grow 200 acres of tobacco on his farm. He said each acre generates thousands of dollars in local, state, and federal revenues.

"We, and the people like me, are supporting the schools, churches, homes, shopping centers, hospitals," he said.

"We're supporting the whole economy in our area. If you took the tobacco out of this area, it would be like taking the water out of the river."

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the average value per acre of a crop of soybeans in 1995 was \$237. For corn, it was \$358, and for peanuts, \$672. The comparable figure for tobacco was \$3,619.

Max Lennon, president of Baptist-related Mars Hill College in Mars Hill, N.C., and former agricultural dean at Ohio State University, said support for and opposition to tobacco farming varies with geography.

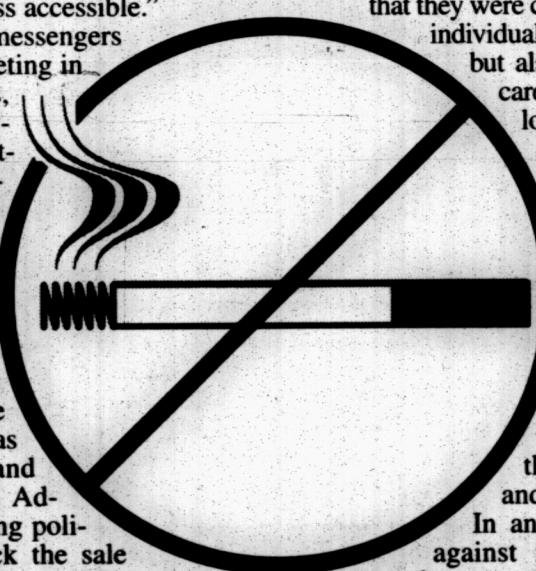
In Ohio, he said, "there's a tobacco-producing area towards the Ohio River. The views on the issue vary tremendously from the southern part of the state toward the northern part of the state."

Not only did Lennon agree the farmers are the forgotten people in the tobacco debate, he said the way to help them make a transition to other forms of livelihood has been a forgotten issue. "I think it's an issue for society to address," he said.

While primarily focusing on the health hazards of tobacco use, the Christian Life Commission's Mitchell agreed the situation of the farmer is a tough one.

"I don't think that there is a quick fix," Mitchell said. "I think that it's going to take a lot of time in some cases for alternatives to be possible."

Turner, a free lance writer, is a former writer for Religious News Service.



Louisiana voters will get a parish-by-parish chance to reject legalized gambling on the upcoming Nov. 5 election day, but hardly anyone is happy about the final process. Gambling proponents pushed the state legislature to unilaterally approve gambling on its own — the same procedure that led to controversy and corruption a few years ago. However, opponents of legalized gambling succeeded Sept. 21 in passing a state constitutional amendment that prohibited legalized gambling without a vote of the people, effectively preventing the legislature from once again legalizing gambling on its own. Some proponents didn't support the amendment, worrying that the amendment placed provisions for gambling in the state constitution for the first time. Anti-gambling Governor Mike Foster (R) hopes for the best in the Nov. 5 voting. "The worst effect, really, is the mentality that we're beginning to depend on gambling for revenues in the state. The majority of gambling interests are owned to some degree — or a great degree — by out of staters, and that money gets right out of the economy," he said.

No one but the pastor's wife knew that he spent hours curled into a fetal position, battling his emotional demons until he could work up the courage to once again face his contentious congregation on Sunday morning. They found out how deeply stressed he was, however, when he committed suicide after a particularly stormy Wednesday night business session at the church. "(He) never asked for help because the pastor isn't supposed to need help," said Bob Anderson, first vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention and newly-chosen head of The Antioch Affection Foundation in San Antonio, Texas, which was conceived to work with pastors and church staffers who find themselves in similar situations. The Antioch Affection will work to rehabilitate terminated pastors and staff members, as well as teach churches the fine points of Christian reconciliation. "We're looking for a win-win situation where the church and the staff member will each continue to be what God wants them to be. When a church fires someone, it not only hurts that person and his or her family but it harms the church," Anderson pointed out.

10 years ago

Scores of people walking the midway at the Mississippi State Fair are intrigued by the offer at the Mississippi Baptist Child Evangelism Fellowship tent to hear an explanation of salvation presented through a "wordless book."

20 years ago

Elmer Howell, director for 17 years of the Brotherhood Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, announces his retirement. Paul Harrell, longtime Brotherhood Department consultant, is chosen to replace Howell.

50 years ago

California Baptists write to thank the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board for sponsoring Mississippi College student John Holston in his summer ministry effort to help organize Vacation Bible Schools in The Golden State.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

WILLIAM H. PERKINS, JR.



Where ministry is done

The month of October for Mississippi Baptists is, among a host of other activities, the time when many of the 71 county and multi-county associations hold their annual meetings around the state.

These associations are created and maintained by local church congregations who want to further the work of the Lord in their local areas, but outside the range of their individual churches.

Like Southern Baptists at every level, they realize banding together results in greater evangelistic returns.

There's no denominational requirement compelling local churches to come together for this type of missions work. They do it because they want to see everyone around them come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and they feel that the associational structure is an ideal way to do that.

As a matter of fact, the first Baptist association preceded the organization of the state Baptist

convention and even the granting of Mississippi statehood. Associations have always been a powerful way to reach lost people.

At these associational annual meetings, the fellowship, family spirit, and enthusiasm are palpable.

Report after report of activities is given, more often than not with a gleam in the eye of the presenter that is unmistakable, telegraphing the message that these folks are on mission for the Lord and really — I mean, *really* — loving every minute of it.

Like virtually every facet of Baptist life in this state, Mississippi Baptists are involved in associational activities in outside proportions when compared to larger, more populous Southern Baptist states.

Associations manage projects almost too numerous to list: church starts, missions, benevolences, literacy programs, food banks, clothing warehouses, Christmas toy ministries, crisis pregnancy intervention, disaster

relief, seaman's centers, truckers ministries, county fair booths, home care for the elderly, recreational activities and facilities, ethnic ministries, reconciliation, and addiction recovery, to name just a few.

If one spends a little time in associational work and gets involved with these folks in their ministries, it's easy to conclude that this is a place where hands-on work for the Lord is truly being accomplished.

If you're not involved in your local association, you should be. There's no doubt you'll be blessed and that the work of the Lord will experience a manifold increase.

Ask your pastor how to get involved in your association's work, and how to get in touch with your associational Director of Missions.

Here's to Mississippi's Baptist associations and their long history of doing more than their share to bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus.

"NINEVEH — AND NOW VEGAS! MY OPPORTUNITIES ARE MORE THAN I CAN BEAR!"



Oct. 20 is Bivo Ministers Sunday...

Bivocational ministry at heart of Southern Baptist life

By Matt Buckles

What is a bivocational minister? "Bi" means two, and "vocation" means profession, job, work, career, etc. The term simply means that some ministers have two jobs.

We use this term to designate ministers (pastors, music, youth, education ministers, etc.) who have a church position, but do not receive their total living wages from the church.

In other words, they are not fully supported financially by their churches.

Allow me to share some facts and observations about bivo (the common short designation) ministers that may help you to understand their work and more highly value them.

Bivocational ministers are more common than you think. About 40% of the churches in the Mississippi Baptist Convention are served by bivo pastors. Most music, youth, and education positions are held by bivocational, volunteer ministers, or laypersons.

In our sister state convention of Alabama, bivo pastors serve just over 50% of the churches. In some other state conventions, the figures are comparable to Mississippi and Alabama. The SBC average is approximately 33%.

According to Dale Holloway, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board bivocational ministry con-

sultant and a resident of Florence, the percentage of bivo pastors is increasing.

Bivocational ministry is both Biblical and historical. The apostle Paul and prophet Amos are just two examples of great men of Scripture who both ministered and worked.

Paul chose to work and not be a burden to the churches. The missionary William Carey was a cobbler. Many ministers and missionaries throughout the Christian pilgrimage have been "working ministers."

God has always used men and women who have a call from him and a job in the world. The "full-time" model is a post-WW II expectation in Baptist life.

Bivo pastors are full time — just not fully supported by their church. They walk in great Biblical and historical company.

Bivocational ministers suffer from a lack of understanding, wrong labeling, and wrong perception. Many churches should have fully-supported ministers. Other churches cannot. Fully-supported ministry is not the only standard for faithfulness in God's work.

Some bivo ministers struggle with low self-esteem, and others with obvious perception and understanding problems. Bivo

ministers desire to remain bivocational for various reasons.

Some are serving small churches not able to pay a full-living wage. Some are students, while others are in ministry positions needing bivo ministers.

Bivocational Ministers Appreciation Day

Shepherds, Servants, Ministers of the Marketplace

October 20, 1996

Our Baptist colleges and seminaries should be encouraged to develop support and training opportunities for intentional bivocational ministers. Many college and seminary graduates will not find a fully-supported position.

Bivocational ministers should strive to develop themselves and their church leaders. Even if their situation is difficult, the bivo should attempt to gain training in ministry.

They should strive to develop leadership, planning, and people skills. Because of time factors and the need for people to be involved in church work, the bivo should train and organize his members for ministry.

Churches should evaluate their situation and decide if it is time to:

- add an additional bivo staff person;

- increase their salary support to allow a fully-supported ministry if the needs and choices so dictate;

- change the salary and outlook situation to allow their minister(s) to be employed outside the church to help both the minister's personal and the church's finances.

State convention, associational, denominational, and

other key leaders should continue to develop support, training, and resources for bivo ministers. The work has never been easy, but this important group of ministers needs our support.

Fellowship and support opportunities suiting their double-duty schedules can be planned and the results will be evident as well as rewarding.

Local churches should appreciate their bivo ministers. One of the ways to support the bivo is for retreat, vacation, or time off with this family to be granted with no begrudging from the church. Instead, a church-paid respite will be beneficial and long appreciated.

Bivocational ministers are as varied and diverse as their congregations. They range in socio-economic and educational levels as much as the people of their churches.

Get to know a bivo minister. You will find how God is using a double-duty minister. Grow to see these "working ministers" for who they are.

They will appreciate it and you will also.

Buckles is consultant for bivocational ministries in the Church Administration Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

Baptist Record

VOLUME 120 (ISSN-0005-5778) NUMBER 36
Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$8.35 per year payable in advance. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member Association of State Baptist Papers.

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Postmaster: Send changes of address to The BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205. Send news, communication, and address changes to The Editor, BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205 (601) 968-3800

Mississippi Baptist Convention

161st Annual Session

First Church, Jackson — October 29-October 30, 1996

Tuesday morning, Oct. 29, Session 1

8:30	Prelude	Organist/Pianist, FBC, Jackson
8:35	Sounding of the Gavel	Jimmy Porter
8:40	Choral Praise	Sanctuary Choir, FBC, McComb
8:50	Congregational Praise	Mark Moore
	Hear the Word of the Lord	Bob Simmons
	Prayer	Frank Bishop
9:00	Organization of the Convention	Jimmy Porter
	Recognition and Seating of Messengers	Ken Anderson
	Report of Committee on Order of Business	Jimmy Porter
	Tellers and Credentials Committees	FBC, Jackson
	Welcome	Robert Hamblin
9:10	Bible Treasure	P. J. Scott
9:35	Report of Committee on Committees	Mark Moore
9:40	Presentation of Resolutions	Jimmy Porter
9:50	Congregational Praise	
9:55	"Faithful Through the Years" Recognition	
	Soloist: Jason Ivey	
10:00	Election of President	Clarence Cooper
10:20	Choral Praise	Sanctuary Choir, FBC, McComb
10:25	President's Address	Jimmy Porter
10:55	Second Ballot for President (if needed)	
11:00	Convention Board Report	Odean Puckett
11:05	Choral Praise	Sanctuary Choir, FBC, McComb
11:10	Message	Richard Jackson
11:35	Benediction	Wayne Riley

Tuesday afternoon, Session 2

1:30	Prelude	Sanctuary Choir, Emmanuel, Grenada
1:40	Sounding of the Gavel	Edgar Lee Wright
	Congregational Praise	Barry Womell
	Hear the Word of the Lord	Grady Collins
	Prayer	David Hamilton
1:50	My Journey in Christ	Jos Ratcliff
1:55	Business Session	Jimmy Porter
	Presentation of 1997 Budget	Robert Upchurch
	Election of Convention Officers	
	Resolution Committee Report (part 1)	
	Miscellaneous Business	
2:25	Bible Treasure	Robert Hamblin
2:50	Congregational Praise	Barry Womell
2:55	Report of Christian Action Commission	Paul Jones
3:05	Baptist Children's Village Celebration	Ronny Robinson
3:25	Business Session	
	Election of Convention Officers	
	Report of Convention and Bylaws Committee	
	Report of Missions, and Preacher Committee	
4:15	Business Session	
	Final Presentation of Resolutions	
	Recognition of Guests	
	Recognition of New Workers	
	Memorial Service	
5:00	Partnership Missions	Jimmy Porter
5:15	Congregational Praise	Bill Causey
5:30	Choral Praise	Louis Smith
6:00	Hear the Word of the Lord	Bill Hardy
	Prayer	Mickey Gentry
7:10	My Journey in Christ	David McCubbin
7:15	Final Presentation of Resolutions	
7:20	Recognition of Guests	
	Recognition of New Workers	
7:35	Memorial Service	
7:40	Partnership Missions	
7:55	Congregational Praise	
8:00	Choral Praise	Mississippi Singing Churchmen
8:05	Mississippi Baptist Convention Emphasis	Bill Causey
8:45	Benediction	Mike May

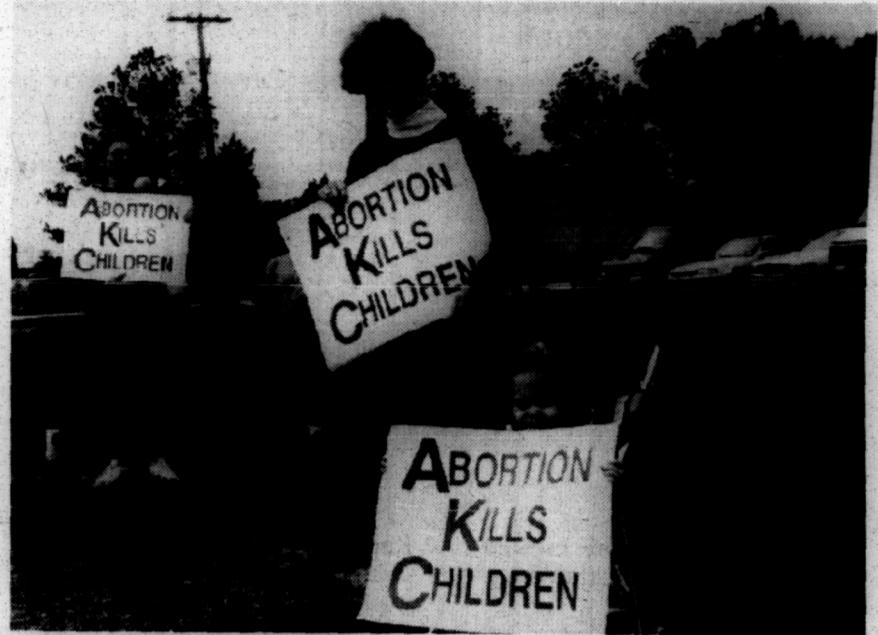
Wednesday morning, Oct. 30, Session 4

8:30	Prelude	Organist/Pianist, FBC, Jackson
8:35	Sounding of the Gavel	Jimmy Porter

Continued on Page 4

Lifechain

Kylie Woodfield (in baby carriage) and her grandmother Ann Staley (standing, foreground) were part of a group of 36 people from Van Winkle Church, Jackson, who participated in the Oct. 6 Life Chain event on U.S. Highway 80 in Clinton. Life Chain is an annual non-denominational, nationwide event designed to increase awareness of the evils of abortion. Several other Life chains were organized in locations around the state. For more information, contact the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission at (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651. (Photo by Carl M. White)



THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

The Baptist Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

Thursday, October 17, 1996

Published Since 1877

Covenant proposed between MBC, institutions' trustees

By William H. Perkins Jr.

with the state convention.

Trustees of MBC-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton voted to sever the school's relationship with the state convention in 1994, and only intense negotiations

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) approved a far-reaching plan Oct. 14 that proponents say will allow Mississippi to bypass the epidemic of Baptist institutions severing ties with affiliated state Baptist conventions.

A key portion of the plan, which will be submitted to messengers to the annual Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) meeting Oct. 29-30, establishes a covenant relationship between MBC and trustees governing MBC-affiliated institutions.

Under the covenant, trustees pledge to continue management of the institution as a Christian entity under God's guidance and acknowledge the institution's role in the Mississippi Baptist strategy to win Mississippi and the world to Jesus.

The plan also permits trustees of MBC-affiliated institutions to jointly nominate new trustees to their respective boards as a part of the MBC nomination process already in place.

Under the plan, trustees and the MBC nominating committee will jointly produce a slate of trustees for Convention consideration.

At the special called meeting of the board in the chapel of the Baptist Building in Jackson, MBCB executive director-treasurer Bill Causey explained that state and federal laws recognize trustees of non-profit institutions as the legal holders of deeds to the property of those institutions.

Causey said that legal recognition means institutions of the Mississippi Baptist Convention governed by boards of trustees can unilaterally sever ties by action of the trustees, even though historical ownership can be proven to rest

University in Alabama, and — just last week — Ouachita College in Arkansas.

"We can't sit and wait to see what happens," and risk losing affiliation with Mississippi Baptist institutions, Causey stressed.

"We have found a way to bind them to us and still follow the law," he said.

As a measure of enthusiasm for the proposal, Causey pointed out, a number of trustees have already signed and submitted their covenants as of the Oct. 14 board meeting.

MBC institutions affected by the proposal include:

— Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain.

— William Carey College in Hattiesburg.

— Mississippi Baptist Medical Center in Jackson.

— Mississippi Baptist Children's Village in Jackson.

Mississippi College will continue to be governed by a similar agreement that was put in place after the 1994 negotiations.

Church financial information available

As budget committees at most of the 2,000 Mississippi Southern Baptist churches pore over their financial records and prepare budgets for the upcoming church year, Berri A. Shirley, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) Administrative Assistant for Business, wants to remind church members that the MBCB business office is prepared to answer questions based on the information on file in the Baptist Building. Anyone interested in financial information on their church can contact the MBCB business office at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39203-0530. Telephone: (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.

Continued from Page 3

8:40	Choral Praise	Mississippi College Concert Chorale
8:50	Congregational Praise	Richard Joiner
	Hear the Word of the Lord	Charles Jones
	Prayer	Dwain Ard
9:00	Bible Treasure	Robert Hamblin
9:25	Report of Christian Education Commission	Eddie Kinchen
9:30	Choral Praise	Mississippi College Concert Chorale
9:35	Introduction of College Presidents	Jimmy Porter
	Report from Mississippi College	Howell Todd
9:45	Business Session	Robert Upchurch
	Adoption of 1997 Budget	Wayne Edwards
	Report of Committee on Nominations	
	Resolutions Committee Report (part 2)	
	Miscellaneous Business	
10:30	Congregational Praise	Richard Joiner
10:35	My Journey In Christ	James O. Bickham
10:45	Choral Praise	One Voice
11:00	Message	Mildred McWhorter
11:30	Benediction	Billy Williams

Registration

Registration will be on the second floor of First Church, Jackson, above the State Street entrance. Volunteers from First Church will begin registering messengers at noon on Monday, Oct. 28, and at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 29. Registration will close each evening at the beginning of the night session. On Wednesday registration will be open from 8-10 a.m.

Parking

Since parking is extremely limited around First Church, messengers and guests of the convention are encouraged to park at the fairgrounds. Parking will be open beside the "super slide" at the fairground entrance on Jefferson Street. Shuttle vans will be available for rides to and from First Church for the conferences on Monday and for all convention sessions. Those attending the convention are cautioned against overparking on meters and other illegal parking. Improperly parked cars may be towed in severe cases.

Preschool care

Preschool care will be available for children by pre-registration, ages birth through five, at First Church, Jackson, during the pastor's conference and the Convention, Oct. 28-30. Call (601) 949-1904/1912 to pre-register. The preschool departments are located on the street level off North State Street.

For safety, parents are asked to abide by the following procedures.

1. Pre-register, giving the name of the child or children, the parent's name, and the church represented.
2. Pick up a security card for each child upon arrival.
3. Be sure all belongings are labeled.
4. For infants, leave a time schedule for feeding.
5. Leave the children no earlier than 20 minutes before the beginning of a session and pick them up no later than 20 minutes after the close of a session.

Children may remain in the preschool area during the convention lunch break on Tuesday if parents provide a snack lunch.



Mississippi Baptist Medical Center and the Mississippi College School of Nursing will join together during the Mississippi Baptist Convention Oct. 29 to provide registered convention messengers with health screenings, including cholesterol measurement, blood sugar, and a complete health risk assessment. Checking Mississippi Baptist Convention Board executive director-treasurer Bill Causey are (from left) Joseph Pitts, Myrna Stinson, Wendy Vest, Deborah Bolian, and April Tillery.

Mississippi Baptist Convention hosts many auxiliary meetings

Monday, October 28**NOON**

Mississippi Baptist Religious Education Association fall luncheon, 11:30 a.m., Colonial Heights Church, Jackson. Cost \$10 per person until Oct. 16. \$15 per person after Oct. 16. Contact Cortez Hutchinson, First Church, Yazoo City, P.O. Box 780, Yazoo City, 39194.

EVENING

Lay Missions Conference Banquet, 5 p.m., fellowship hall, First Church, Jackson. Dellanna O'Brien, executive director-treasurer of the Woman's Missionary Union speaking. Cost \$8 per person. Reservation deadline is Oct. 21. For more information contact the Brotherhood Department at 1-800-748-1651 or in Jackson, 968-3800.

Tuesday, October 29**MORNING**

Annuitants Fellowship annual breakfast, 7:30 a.m. fellowship hall east, First Church, Jackson. Don McLeod, Annuity Board manager of region 2, guest speaker. Reservations by Oct. 21. For more information contact Robin Nichols at 1-800-748-1651 or in Jackson, 968-3800.

Mississippi College Christian Service Alumni breakfast, 7:30 a.m., fellowship hall east, First Church. MC President Howell Todd, other MC administrators and faculty members will be present.

NOON

Mid-America Seminary alumni association luncheon, 11:45 a.m., Coliseum Ramada Inn, Jackson. Cost \$12 per person. Contact Ken Dawson at (601) 234-2710.

New Orleans Seminary alumni luncheon, noon, fellowship hall east, First Church, Jackson. Cost \$10 per person. Contact Nathan Barber at (601) 264-2427.

EVENING

Chaplain's Banquet, 4:30 p.m., Baptist Building Skyroom, Bob Vickers, director of military chaplaincy at the Home Mission Board speaking. For reservation contact Missions Extension and Associational Administration Department at 1-800-748-1651 or in Jackson 968-3800.

Luther Rice alumni meeting, 5 p.m., Shoney's on High Street. David Rhew speaking. Dutch dinner treat. For more information contact Tom Stevens, pastor of Lena Church at (601) 654-8822.

Blue Mountain ministerial alumnae banquet, 5:15 p.m., Broadmoor Church, Jackson. Cost \$6 per person. Contact Wayne Marshall at (601) 895-1900

William Carey College Alumni fellowship, immediately following the Tuesday evening session of the MBC, Baptist Building chapel. Contact Donna Wheeler at the Carey booth for more information.

Wednesday, October 30**MORNING**

Clarke College Alumni fellowship breakfast, 7 a.m., fellowship hall, First Church, Jackson.

Bivocational Ministers and Wives breakfast fellowship, 7 a.m., Baptist Building chapel. Contact Matt Buckles at 1-800-748-1651 or in Jackson 968-3800.

HOTEL INFORMATION

Below are the room rates of some of the hotels near downtown Jackson. Prices do not include tax.

Cabot Lodge I-55 at County Line Road 120 Dyess Road Ridgeland, MS 39157 (601) 957-0757	\$68.00 single standard \$72.00 king-size (\$8.00 each additional person)
Cabot Lodge—Millsaps State Street at Woodrow Wilson 2375 North State Street (601) 948-8650 (must ask for Miss. Bapt. Conv. rate)	\$64.00 standard or king \$74.00 executive floor (\$8 each additional person) Includes complimentary breakfast
Coliseum Ramada Inn I-55 North between Pearl & High St. exits (601) 969-2141	\$59.00 single \$66.00 double free breakfast buffet
Harvey (formerly Holiday Inn Downtown) 200 East Amite Street (601) 969-5100 (must ask for Miss. Bapt. Conv. rate)	\$55.00 single or double
Red Roof Inn I-55 and High Street (601) 969-5006	\$53.00 per room
The Wilson Inn High Street (601) 948-4466	\$43.95 single \$59.95 suite (\$7 each additional adult)
Edison Walthall 225 E. Capital (601) 948-6161	\$62.00 single \$72.00 couple

"Merry Christmas Korea" to be completed at 1996 Convention

Mississippi Baptists have responded overwhelmingly to the call to ship 200 large shipboard containers of food to the starving people of North Korea, according to Paul Harrell, director of the Brotherhood Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

As of early October, approximately 1200 boxes have been distributed through the 57 associational directors of missions in the state, Harrell said, adding that it is reasonable to expect that every box will be returned and filled according to the specifications.

food. Each state agreed to provide 200 boxes. One box will feed a family of four for one month.

Boxes were distributed to local churches primarily through the associational offices of the state. Each specially-sized box must be packed according to exact specifications and accompanied by a check for \$20 made out to the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board/Korea Food Project. The money will cover shipping charges, Harrell said.

Harrell requested that the packed boxes and accompanying

food boxes.

On Wednesday morning, October 30, the truck packed with the food boxes will depart for Memphis, where the food boxes will be loaded into a 20-foot shipping container. The container will leave Memphis in mid-November to arrive in Korea in mid-December.

According to Harrell, tracts, Bibles, or other printed matter should not be included in the boxes.

North Korea is fearful of religions and Christianity in particular, he said, and including those materials might close this small opening for ministry to a communist dominated people.

Harrell added that each box will have a label that states in English and Korean, "Love Gift from Southern Baptist Christians of the United States of America."

The three-state food container is to be distributed among the people of Pyongyang, Korea.

Japanese trade sources say as many as 100 people die per day of hunger in the city of Pyongyang alone.

Until recently, North Korean officials have not even acknowledged that a famine situation exists in the country, and this acknowledgment has opened a small door for Christian ministry to the normally closed North Koreans, according to Harrell.

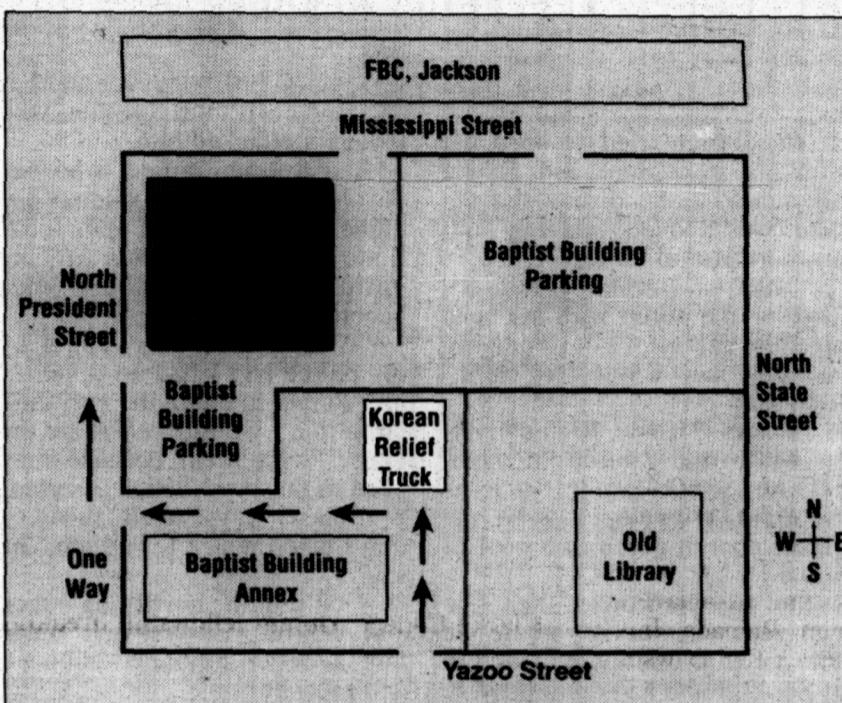
Cooperative Services International (CSI), a non-profit organization of the Foreign Mission Board that provides humanitarian aid and development assistance to selected countries, is leading the food distribution effort in cooperation with the Brotherhood and WMU.

Lewis Myers, a Mississippian, is head of CSI.

Named "Merry Christmas Korea," the Women's Missionary Unions (WMU) and Brotherhood Departments from Mississippi, Arkansas and Tennessee were asked by the Brotherhood Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention to provide a minimum of 600 70-lb. boxes of

checks be delivered to the Baptist Building at 515 Mississippi Street in Jackson on Monday, October 28, from 9-5 a.m. and on Tuesday, October 29, 8-5 p.m.

A truck staffed by Disaster Relief workers will be parked on the lower parking lot at the rear of the Baptist Building to receive the



Nine area Bible drill clinics on slate for November

The Discipleship and Family Ministries Department has scheduled Bible drill clinics in nine locations on November 11, 12 and 14, 1996. (See chart at right for locations.) The clinics will give detailed help for beginning and leading Bible drill in the local church. Clinics are for both children and youth Bible drill leaders, judges and callers.

Leading the clinics are Steve Jackson, pastor of McLaurin Heights Church, Pearl; Lillian Walters, associational Bible drill director for Metro association; and Mary Wells, a member of Paul Truitt Memorial Church, Pearl, and a special worker in Bible drill.

For more information contact Wes Pegues or Don Hicks in the Discipleship and Family Ministry Department at 1-800-748-1651, or in Jackson 968-3800.

DATE

Nov. 11

Nov. 12

Nov. 14

LOCATION

First Church Sardis
First Church Wiggins
Crossgates Church, Brandon

First Church Booneville
First Church Newton
Meadville Church, Meadville

North Greenwood Church,
Greenwood
First Church, West Point
38th Avenue Church, Hattiesburg

(all clinic times from 7 to 9 p.m.)



LEADER

Steve Jackson
Mary Wells
Lillian Walters

Steve Jackson
Lillian Walters
Mary Wells

Mary Wells
Steve Jackson
Lillian Walters



Priority, the music ministry group of the Mississippi College Baptist Student Union, is available for youth settings, retreats, or worship services. Members include, top row (from left) Jon Norris, Thad Burkhalter, Elizabeth Carter, Jonathan Anglin; bottom row (from left) Erin Barkley, Sara Bowlby, Kathy O'Dell, Jason Holmes. For booking and concert information contact Steve Smith at (601) 925-3238.

Grassroots ideas invited for possible BSSB name

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Southern Baptists across the nation are invited to submit by Nov. 1 suggestions for a possible new name for the Baptist Sunday School Board (BSSB) as the agency studies the possibility of a more descriptive identity.

According to BSSB President James T. Draper Jr., the process began in late summer, "with no preconceived ideas about whether our name should be changed."

He said factors leading to the study included awareness that "the current name is not descriptive of the broad range of the board's products and services. While it was established in 1891 with one assignment, producing Sunday School literature for Southern Baptist churches, the board today provides resources in many areas.

In addition to Sunday School, the board provides resources and services in discipleship, family and student ministries, pastor and staff issues, media services, architectural services, music ministries, drama, recreation and wellness, and multicultural leadership, among others. The board's trade publishing group includes a wide range of Bibles, books and other products offered under the Broadman & Holman imprint. The agency also owns and operates a 63-store chain of retail bookstores as well as national conference centers in Ridgecrest, N.C., and Glorieta, N.M.

As a part of the Southern Baptist Convention's restructuring, the board will assume responsibility for stewardship and church history education, capital fund-raising, men's and women's enrichment ministries and Christian schools and home school ministries. Included in other changes related to the SBC "Covenant for a New Century" are new names announced earlier this year for several other Southern Baptist entities.

Based on interviews with individual and church customers, employees, trustees, the board's

executive management group, SBC leaders, media representatives, and employees of companies that regularly do business with the board, a decision was made in September to move forward with exploration of a possible new named.

After all input has been received and evaluated, a 19-member employee committee will formulate a recommendation to the board's administration in early January 1997, with a report for approval presented to the board's trustees in their February meeting.

For tabulation purposes, suggested names should be mailed on a postcard, or a 3-inch by 5-inch index card enclosed in an envelope, addressed to: Name Change, 127 Ninth Avenue, North, Nashville, TN 37234-0189.

Golden Gate asks for boost

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP) — Trustees of Golden Gate Seminary on Oct. 8 approved a resolution asking the Southern Baptist Convention to hike Cooperative Program (CP) allocations for the six SBC seminaries.

"Our part of the pie has continued to shrink" over the years, said William O. "Bill" Crews, president of the Mill Valley, Calif.-based seminary.

Crews said there is some hope the current SBC restructuring will yield "a considerable sum of money" that can be reallocated among the convention's agencies.

"Everybody's getting in line" for some of the money, Crews said.

He said the six seminary presidents agreed in September to seek approval of the resolution by their respective trustee boards. They hope a unified appeal will strengthen their bid to get a bigger CP share.

Out of the mouths of parrots — in Mexico

BAJA CALIFORNIA, Mexico

— Headlines out of Mexico's southern state of Chiapas have been filled with violence between the government and rebels in the area. But not all the news out of Chiapas is grim.

Consider the story Foreign Mission Board missionary Rebecca Alexander tells about the chorus-singing parrot she met there.

Rebecca works with her husband, Allen, in church planting and development in Baja California. She is the national president of Mexico's Women's Missionary Union. Once a year she makes a "missionary journey" to teach about women's and children's work.



This trip took her to Tapachula in the state of Chiapas.

"In every home in Chiapas the people had parrots," Rebecca said. Often the parrots sang Christian choruses their owners had learned at church.

One family Rebecca was staying with had a 20-year-old parrot that had lived with them all its life. Her hosts had gone out for awhile, and she was alone in the house with the bird.

The parrot was sitting on top of his cage while Rebecca was seated at a table nearby, working on her material to teach in the churches. She started humming one of the children's songs, but couldn't remember how to finish it. When she gave up trying to remember how it went, the parrot immediately started singing that very song.

"He sang it from the beginning until the end, and he looked at me, and then he twirled around and hung upside down and said, 'Up, up with young people!'

Religion grows as morality declines, according to New Jersey survey group

PRINCETON, N.J. (ABP) — American faith is much wider than it is deep, according to a Gallup study of religious values and practice.

"One of the seeming paradoxes of American society is that religion is gaining ground, but morality is losing ground," the Princeton Religion Research Center reports in its "Emerging Trends" newsletter.

The research center analyzed a nationwide study of American adults who shared their perspectives on faith and life.

The poll found that "organized religion in America was at a 10-year high," according to such standards as church attendance and Americans' own expressions of their faith, Princeton research analysts note.

But other surveys contradict Americans' self-professed piety, they add.

For example: Two-thirds of high school students admitted they would lie to achieve a business objective.

Teen pregnancy, drug abuse, and juvenile crime rates in the United States are among the highest in the industrialized world. Sixty percent of new marriages are expected to end in divorce.

Consequently, Gallup polls show Americans' concern for the national moral climate is at an all-time high.

The research analysts offer two theories for the contrast between professed religion and practiced morality.

First, American's depth of commitment to religious faith is less impressive than their "attachment to organized religion," they say.

About 40% of Americans

attend church weekly, a level that is among the highest in the world. Meanwhile, "large numbers of Americans are biblical illiterates and lack awareness and understanding of their own religious traditions and the central doctrines of their faith," the researchers claim.

"We want the fruits of faith, but less of the obligations," their report notes.

Two studies illustrate that point. "Facing God's will" ranked at the bottom of a list of nine social values.

It fell behind happiness, satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment and five other values.

In addition, teenagers ranked "religious faith" as least important of eight prominent traits, trailing patience, hard work and five others.

So, while religion may be considered important by most Americans, it is not a priority, the report observes.

Second, perhaps religion "is actually having a pronounced effect on the climate of morality," the analysts speculate.

According to this line of reasoning, "the situation would actually be far worse if religious conviction on a significant level were not present in our society."

To illustrate, they report that half of American adults devote two or three hours per week to volunteer causes, often to church-related ministries.

In addition, 80% of Americans say their religious beliefs help them respect and assist others, while two-thirds say their beliefs prevent them from doing things they know are wrong.

The Gallup study revealed a

Church tragedy... Preacher intends to forgive men who nearly took his life

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP) — March 20, 1996, is a date Eric Rich will never forget. As for the actual day, however, he probably will never remember it.

Seven months ago, Rich, pastor of Westside Church, Red Springs, N.C., was brutally attacked on the front steps of the rural church by two masked men attempting to rob the church and its parishioners.

Investigators believe Rich was beaten on the head with the butt of a shotgun.

Rich, a student at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., was hospitalized in critical condition for 12 days at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C.

Emergency room doctors originally thought Rich's cracked skull was the result of a gunshot wound, but tests later showed the

injuries were the result of blows delivered by a blunt object.

Rich relies on eyewitness accounts and reports from police and rescue personnel to fill in the details of the incident erased from his memory by the massive trauma to his head.

Choir members said Rich led the intruders out of the sanctuary and outside a side door where they chased him around the church.

"I know that from my own pastor's heart what I was trying to do was get them out of the church away from the people ... and (then) try to get back in to lock them out," Rich said.

When Rich tried to open the church's front door and escape his attackers, he discovered the door was locked, leaving him nowhere else to turn.

"They said when I was out there on the porch with my head bleeding and all, I got to praying and they said I was real calm," Rich said.

Frances Carlisle, Rich's mother-in-law and church member, held her son-in-law in her arms the night of the attack as he laid on the church porch in a pool of blood.

She said she worried then if he survived whether he would be able to recall the many passages of Scripture he had committed to memory.

"The devil tried to beat the Word of God out of his head but he had the Word of God hid in his heart that he may not sin against God," she said.

Carlisle said in his recovery Rich has practiced what he has preached. "It's just made him a stronger, more determined and seasoned preacher," she said.

Rich has served as pastor of Westside for about five years. At 32 years of age, he views the brutal attack and agonizing recovery as part of God's plan for his life.

"God had a purpose and a plan, and it was all part of his providential care," Rich said. "Often times the Bible teaches us that we have to go through the valley."

Rich cites Isaiah 43:2 as source of abiding strength throughout his ordeal. "When you walk through the fire you shall not be burned," Rich said, quoting the Scripture text.

"If you're going to stand up for God you might as well go ahead and face it that you're going to do battle with Satan," he said.

Rich said he hopes for another encounter with the two men who savagely attacked him.

Red Springs police, who say the church is located in one of the highest crime areas in town, continue to follow leads in the unsolved crime when they become available.

"If they were ever caught by the police and I had an opportunity to talk to them, the very first thing that I would do is share the gospel with them because they need to be saved," Rich asserted.

"These guys need Jesus. I don't hate them. I love them," he said.

Rich said the horrifying attack and painful recovery has made him a better husband, minister, and preacher.

"I've had a closer encounter, a fresh and new encounter with God just by knowing that he was with me through it all and that even though it was a bad time, God never left me," Rich said.

"He has really strengthened me spiritually through this, and things that maybe would have stressed me out or affected me in a different way, God has led me to understand that the most important thing is that my life is not mine, but it's his and if I just put my trust in him, he will definitely bring us through."

Presidential candidates pass on chance to address abortion, homosexual rights

WASHINGTON (BP) — While President Clinton and Republican challenger Bob Dole debated a variety of topics for 90 minutes Oct. 6, not once did they discuss two of the most contentious issues in the recently adjourned session of the United States Congress.

Neither partial-birth abortion nor homosexual rights was raised in questions from Public Broadcasting System newsman Jim Lehrer, or in comments by Clinton and Dole in the first presidential debate of this election season at Hartford, Conn.

Although Dole described the president as a liberal, he failed to bring up either issue, even though Clinton and Congress clashed on

both issues in the September votes.

In April, Clinton vetoed the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act, which prohibits a grisly procedure in the second half of pregnancy in which viable babies can be destroyed up until day of delivery.

The U.S. House of Representatives overrode the veto in mid-September, but the U.S. Senate fell short of the two-thirds majority required to complete the override attempt.

Clinton also recently endorsed the Employment Non-discrimination Act, which would have given homosexuality the same legal standing as race and gender in the work place, but the U.S. Senate defeated the bill by one vote.

"This debate was more significant for what the candidates did not talk about than it was for what they did talk about," said Will Dodson, the Nashville-based Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's director of government relations.

"They did not talk nearly enough about the moral issues over which this nation is divided.

"Ignoring these issues will not make them go away and will not unite Americans. Their positions on the moral issues in general, abortion in particular and partial-birth abortions especially, are of concern to a large portion of society and should be of concern to all of us," Dodson said.

Kyrgyzstan coat, book donations extended until end of this month

The deadline has been extended for turning in coats and Christian books for a Southern Baptist mission project in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan, according to Mary Miller of Madison, president of International Business Partners and coordinator of the project.

The original deadline for turn-

ing in the items has been moved from Oct. 15 to Oct. 31, said Miller, a member of Broadmoor Church, Jackson.

The sites for dropping off the items remain the same: Broadmoor Church on Northside Drive in Jackson and First Church on State Street in Jackson, she added.

True Love Waits rally set for First Church, Clinton

First Church, Clinton is hosting a True Love Waits Super Rally, Saturday, Oct. 19, at 6 p.m.. True Love Waits is a theme which encourages people to remain sexually pure until marriage.

The event, designed for high school students, includes worship, training and concerts by Jonathan Pierce and Patti Cabrera. Pierce has sung with the Imperials and with the Gaither Vocal Band.

Registration begins at 5:30 p.m.. Cost is \$15.

singing will conclude the day.

An "old Fashion" sacred harp singing will be held on the campus of New Orleans Seminary on Tuesday, Oct. 22, in the Sellers Music Building. A covered dish supper will begin at 6 p.m. with singing to follow.

The books and coats — all sizes are needed, including children's sizes — will be shipped to Kyrgyzstan for distribution by members of Cooperative Services International (CSI), a branch of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va., Miller said.

The books will be placed in the first officially-licensed Christian book store in Kyrgyzstan, located in the city of Bishkek, and sold at a modest price to help keep the self-supporting bookstore open. No profit will be realized, she pointed out.

"The book store puts literature in the hands of Muslims and atheists who want to learn English. It has been very successful since it opened in March," Miller said.

For more information, contact Miller at (601) 856-6526, or Modesta Roberts at (601) 373-4220.

Just for the Record

Glading Baptist Church will honor pastor Charles Kirkfield and his wife Carolyn on pastor's appreciation day, Oct. 20th. The Kirkfields have dedicated 36 years to the ministry. Troy Bankston will bring the sermon in the morning service. Dinner will follow and an afternoon o f

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WANTED: BI-VOCATIONAL Music and/or Youth and Children's Director. Send resumes to: Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 2151 Mt. Zion Rd., Oskyka, MS 39657.

PART TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR First Baptist Byram. Send resume to 7541 Siwell Road, Jackson, MS 39212.

COVINGTON-JEFF DAVIS BAPTIST ASSOCIATION is taking resumes for a Director of Missions. Send resumes to: Covington-Jeff Davis Baptist Association, Personnel Committee, Rt. 1 Box 258 A, Collins, MS 39428. Deadlines for receiving resumes is November 10, 1996.

BIBLIOCIPHER NOW available in booklet, \$2 including s/h. Order from Charlie Marx, 277 Daisy Ave., Hattiesburg, MS 39402.

WANTED: MIN OF ED/YOUTH. Contact Search Committee, FBC, PO Box 1339, St. Francisville, LA 70775.

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LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ph.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

My good friend and mentor, Schuyler Batson, died peacefully on the night of Oct. 9.

He was the first person I met when I got off the airplane in Jackson 14 years ago to begin my ministry here in Mississippi.

He was not only my supervisor but also a friend whose listening ear was always available.

Even though he was physically small in stature, he was a giant of a man. He walked with God, showing the love of God to everyone he met.

He loved his wife and five children. He was a model of commitment and loyalty to his family.

His love of ministry was felt by all who encountered him. He was a minister's minister. Then when his health began to fail, he always took time to call others and pray with them when they needed encouragement.

I look forward to going to heaven now more than ever, to be able to talk and walk once again with my friend, hear his laughter, and see his glowing face that loved Jesus more than anything else.

This anonymous poem says it all about my friend, Schuyler Batson:

*God saw he was getting tired,
And a cure was not to be.
So he put his arms around him
And whispered, "Come with me."*

*With tearful eyes we watched him suffer
And saw him fade away.
Although we loved him dearly,
We could not make him stay.*

*A golden heart stopped beating,
Hard working hands to rest.
God took him home to prove to us
He always knows what's best.*

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.

Homecomings

Hudson, Brookhaven, guest speaker; Johnson Family, Greenville, guest singers; Robby Britt, pastor.

Holcomb (North Central): Oct. 20; 11 a.m.; dinner in fellowship hall, noon; Robert Clegg, guest speaker; Randall Ashley, pastor.

Gooden Lake, Belzoni: Oct. 20; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; noon meal; and 1:30 p.m. singing; Bill

Jayess, Jayess: Oct. 20; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch in fellowship hall; and 1:45 p.m. singing with the Magnolia State Quartet and Sandy Brister; dedication services will follow afternoon singing for the new fellowship hall and other remodeling to existing buildings. Raymond Jeffcoat, former pastor, guest speaker; Lonnie Case, pastor.

Springdale, Ripley: Oct. 20; 35th anniversary; 11 a.m.; dinner

Dry Creek, Florence; Oct. 27; Perry Sanderford from Crossroads Family Counseling will lead the family-oriented program beginning at 10 a.m., highlights Sunday School and worship, and concludes with dinner on the grounds; special music by Susan Clark, minister of music at Dry Creek; Jerry Glass, pastor.

New Hope, Sumrall: Oct. 27; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; dinner in fellowship hall; 1 p.m. singing; Burl Patterson, Mobile, Ala., guest speaker; Bob Thames, Seminary, guest singer; George Gerald Aultman, interim pastor.

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Just for the Record

Bay Springs Church, Jasper Association, recently honored their Girls in Action (GA) for outstanding mission participation. Badges for mission adventures, Christmas in August, foreign and home mission study, and GA camp were presented. Pictured are, front (left to



right), Samantha Powell, Laura McCormick; back (left to right), Marie White, Maggie Holder, Alice McCormick, Christa Alexander. Leaders are Mary Clawson and Lanae McCormick.

Victory Church, Mathiston, will celebrate its quicentennial on Oct. 19. The church will celebrate this time from Sept. 29 - Oct. 31, with the theme of "Renewing the Vision."

Revival services will be held Oct. 17 - 20, with services each night at 7 p.m. (Thurs. - Sat.), and Sunday at 10:55 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.. Higdon Herrington of Itta Bena will preach, and Doyle Smith of Ardmore, Oklahoma will lead music.

The morning service of Oct. 20 will be devoted to the quicentennial, featuring various ministers with past association with Victory Church. Following the service will be a covered-dish lunch and fellowship time. All friends, families, former members and other interested people are invited. Danny Smith is pastor.

The Department of Counseling and Psychology and the Office of Continuing Education at Mississippi College (MC) announce a special class on reality therapy advanced intensive training. Two classes, PSY 647 or COU 647: Advanced Intensive Training in Reality Therapy, and PSY 472: Advanced Control Theory Psychology, will be offered this November. MC faculty members Charles Felder, Margaret Carmean and William Wheeler will be instructors.

Initial meetings for the class are scheduled for two Saturdays, Oct. 19 and Nov. 2, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m..

The intensive week dates and times are as follows: Wed., Nov. 13, 5 - 10 p.m.; Thurs. - Saturday, Nov. 14 - 16, from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; and Sunday, Nov. 17, 1 - 5 p.m.. The class is limited to 13 students.

Graduate, or undergraduate credit is offered, or certification. Fees are based on the particular needs of each participant.

For registration information and cost call (601) 925-3301 or 925-3841.

Fellowship Church, Starkville, celebrated its first anniversary at its permanent location recently. It also celebrated becoming debt free. Organized less than three years ago, the church has progressed from a small prayer group meeting in an apartment to its present location, which includes a 200 seat sanctuary, educational space, a pastorum, and ten acres of land.

Another milestone in the church's history was the calling of J. E. Sims as the church's first full-time pastor in August of this year. "It is exciting to be a part of a group of believers who saw a vision and claimed God's promise of a new work. I have never seen a more caring, dedicated, spiritually mature group of Christians involved in such a young church. God has truly had his hand on Fellowship Baptist Church," Sims said.

Fellowship Church was the recipient of state mission offering funds in 1996 for the purchase of the present property. It is strategically located, being the only Mississippi Baptist church east of Starkville to the county line.



(2nd from left,) Royal Ambassador (RA) camp director of Northwest association, presents a check for \$216.25 from RA campers to Clayton Cloer, (3rd from left,) pastor of Highland Church, Senatobia, for a mission project to Moldavia, Russia. Looking on is Lloyd Ford, (left,) associational education director, and John Perkins, (right,) director of missions.

Harrisburg Church and First Evangelical Church of Tupelo are sponsoring a women's conference called "God is Enough," Oct. 25-26 at Harrisburg Church. Lois Mowday Rabey, author and speaker on women's issues, is the featured speaker. Lisa Leavell of Jackson is the soloist and worship leader. For more information call (601) 844-5250 or 842-8676.

Best selling author and national speaker on men's issues, Steve Farrer of Men's Leadership Ministries in Dallas, TX, will lead the Gulf Coast Men's Leadership Conference, Nov. 1 - 2,

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at First Church, Ocean Springs. Farrar is the author of best-selling books "Point Man," "Standing Tall," and "Finishing Strong." This conference is intended to equip men with the tools necessary to make ethical decisions in the areas of business, family, and home, church, community and school. For registration information call (601) 875-4532.

Mississippi College (MC) was recently listed as a best college value joining other national universities and liberal arts schools in the current "U.S. News & World Report's" 10th annual "American's Best Colleges" issue. These are schools that offer quality education at a relatively reasonable cost. MC ranked fifth among the South's regional universities in value.

The best value rankings were devised to provide a realistic measurement of where students can get the best education for the money. The rankings also relate the cost of attending an institution to its quality, board fees, books and estimated personal expenses, minus the average of need-based grants.

Only schools that finished in the top half of the U.S. News quality rankings of national universities and liberal arts colleges were considered as potential best values. Among regional institutions, only the top 25 percent were considered.

The Choctaw County Women's Missionary Union (WMU) is sponsoring a Women's Celebration, Sat. Oct. 19 at Ackerman Church from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.. Miss Pontotoc, Alisha Walker, is the featured speaker. Music is provided by Regina Weeks. Admission is free. A bring-a-dish pot luck lunch is at noon.

Harvest Day will be held at Wiggins Church, Carthage, on Oct. 20. Activities include Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship,



Rocky Creek Church, Lucedale, recently held a Girls in Action (GA) recognition service with the theme "GAs Carrying the Torch of Prayer for Missions Around the World." GAs honored were (first row from left), Nicole Havard, Anna Howell, Dailee Eubanks, Kayla Mixon, Kathryn Brown; (second row from left) Billie Tilley, leader; Becky Davis, Whitney Thompson, Savannah Brown, Courtney Garriga, Morgan Hurt; (third row from left) Mary Davis, leader; Natasha Fleming, Abby Pilkington, Melissa Goff, Lana Clayton, Shadonna Miller, Brooke Cooper, Emiley Hartley; (fourth row from left) Robin Eubanks, Tamara Havard, Maegan Smith, Tracey Craddock, Kristen Edins, Carrie Tilley; (fifth row from left) Pam Tillman, leader; Kim Bussen, leader; Mildred Brown, leader; Adrian Howell, Vickie Tillman, Jan Hilburn, leader; Ashley Mallette, Joan Fore, leader; Krissy Hilburn, Carmon Thompson, leader; Deanna Mixon, Martha Hurt, leaders; Cori Walters, Erica Williamson, leader; and Dawn Eubanks, leader. Jerry Mixon is pastor.

10:45 a.m.; lunch and fellowship, noon to 1:30 p.m.; and singing starting at 1:30 p.m.; Lonnie Myrick is pastor.

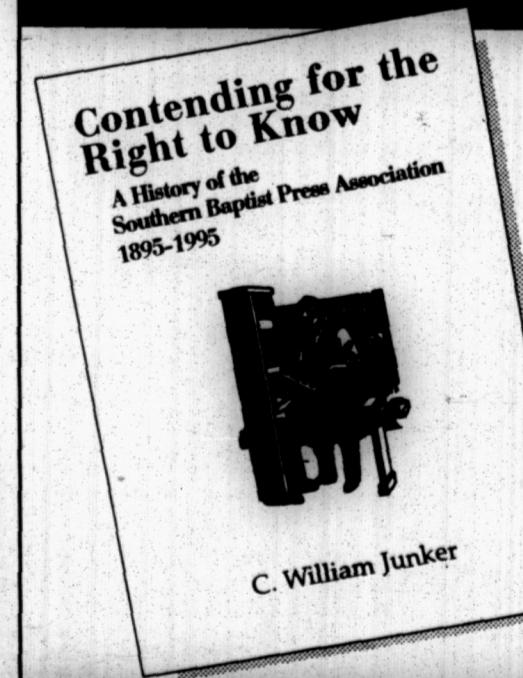
Union Church, Rankin Association, will celebrate its

130th anniversary on Oct. 20 at 10:30 p.m. A noon meal will be served in fellowship hall. Robert Lowe, Jackson, will be the guest speaker. Others on program will include Walter Winstead. Brent Bozeman is pastor.

Staff Changes

Heith Wilkinson has resigned his position as minister of music and youth/children at Emmanuel Church, Cleveland. He has entered into vocational evangelism. His ministry, One Song Ministries, is based in Yazoo City.

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Names in the News



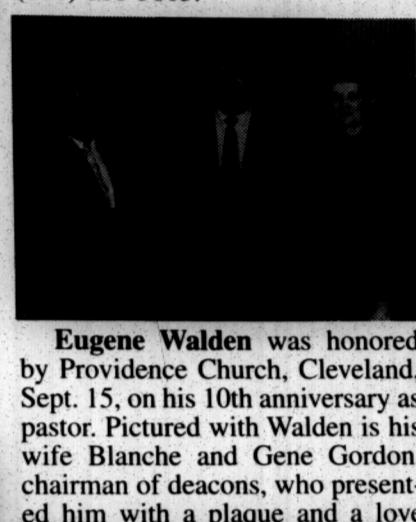
combines many traditional carols with contemporary favorites. McGraw, a writer for Dimension Magazine, a conference leader in the state Women's Missionary Union, and coordinator of the 1996 State Secretaries conference at Camp Garaywa, is available for speaking and singing engagements. For more information call (601) 888-3613.

David O. Morris was ordained to the gospel ministry by Colonial Heights Church, Jackson, on July 21. Morris is student at New Orleans Seminary and youth minister at Jackson Avenue Evangelical Church of New Orleans. Pictured with Morris is Van Quick, vice president of student affairs at Mississippi College (MC) and Howell Todd, president of MC. Morris is the son of Dr. and Mrs. Larry Morris of Jackson.



First Church, Runnelstown, recently licensed **Brett Campbell** to the gospel ministry. Pictured are (left to right) Brett Campbell; Clayton Carver, youth and activity director; Henry Freeman, pastor; Scott Conway, student at MSU; Bradley White, minister of music; Richard Allen, who works with young marrieds.

Liz McGraw, church secretary at Woodville Church, Mississippi association, recently released a Christmas tape entitled **There is McGraw**, a Savior. Recorded in Nashville, the tape



Eugene Walden was honored by Providence Church, Cleveland, Sept. 15, on his 10th anniversary as pastor. Pictured with Walden is his wife Blanche and Gene Gordon, chairman of deacons, who presented him with a plaque and a love



Keith Hudspeth (right) receives a certificate of ordination as a deacon from Cecil Johnson (left), deacon chairman of Mantee Church, Webster Association. Hudspeth was ordained by the church on Sept. 15.

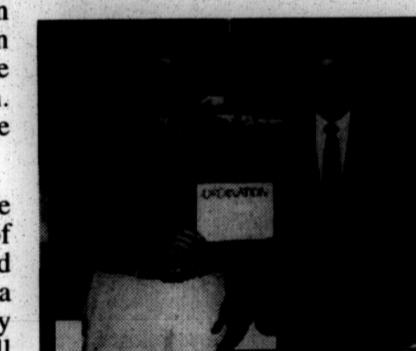
Mavis Wells Creech, 37, wife of Gary Creech, pastor of Fellowship Church, Summit, died and was buried on Oct. 5 after a lengthy illness. She is survived by her parents, Charles and Norvell Wells, Natchez, and two brothers, Don Wells, Sherman, Texas, and Chris Wells, Vicksburg.



Wallerville Church, New Albany, honored its pastor, Ray Burks, (center) with a five year anniversary dinner and a \$500 gift on June 30. Burks and his wife Amy (right) came to Wallerville in June of 1991. Danny Rowland (left), minister of music, presented a plaque on behalf of the church.



Fellowship Church, Houston, celebrated two events in one day Aug. 11. Ground breaking ceremonies were held for a new sanctuary and two men were ordained deacons. Pictured are Allen Hicks, John Truman, new deacon; William R. "Hob" Brand, new deacon; and Bobby Lynn Brook, pastor.



Justin Morgan (left) was ordained a deacon at Magee's Creek Church, Walthall association on Sept. 22. He is pictured with Shelby Watkins (right), pastor. Dr. Morgan and his wife, Penny, have two children, Daniel and Sarah.

Glading Church, Mississippi Association, is holding a pastor appreciation day on Oct. 20 to honor Charles and Carolyn Kirkfield for 36 years of service. Troy Bankston will bring a special message. Dinner and an afternoon of singing will follow. The public is invited.

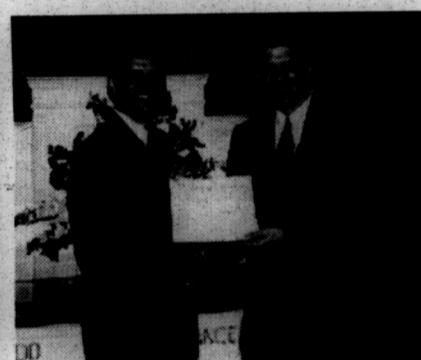
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Rocky Creek Church, Lucedale, used the Vacation Bible School (VBS) offering to purchase a microwave oven, towels, and socks for Golden Age Home residents in Lucedale. The gifts were recently presented to the director, Mary Banks, (back left) by (front from left) Stuart Hurt, Kathleen Tillman, (back row, from left), Dwight Tillman, Josh Fleming and Morgan Hunt. Martha Hurt was VBS director. Jerry Mixon is pastor.



These young men and their leaders at **College Hill Church, Vardaman**, raised over \$600 for the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong offerings this past year. Mike Ramage is pastor.



Harvie Jackson receives a certificate of ordination to the gospel ministry from Ken Hester, pastor of Mantee Church, Webster association. Jackson was ordained on Sept. 22.

Schuyler M. Batson, retired minister, dies after half century of pas-

Schuyler M. Batson, 73, died Oct. 9 of heart failure at his home in Jackson. Funeral services were held Oct. 11 at First Church, Jackson, with burial in Lakewood Memorial Park.

A native of Hillsdale, Batson graduated from Gulfport High School, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn., and Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

While serving for 48 years as a

minister, his pastorate in Mississippi included First Church, Bay St. Louis, First Church, Oxford, First Church, Biloxi, and his last ten years of active ministry were spent at First Church, Jackson, as associate pastor. In 1989, Batson was named associate pastor emeritus when he retired.

Survivors include his wife Lucille; daughters, Martha Batson, Jackson, Dona Batson, Pineville, La., and Wren Hickman, Macon, Ga.; sons, Schuyler Batson Jr., Dallas, Texas, and Jo Batson, Birmingham, Ala.; sister, Ellen Breed, Jackson; brother, Randolph Batson, Brentwood, Tenn.; and eight grandchildren.

Revival Dates

Shiloh (Carroll): Oct. 20-23; Sunday, 11 a.m. followed by dinner; Mon.-Wed., 7:30 p.m.; John Gainer, Ackerman, guest speaker; Doug Warren, pastor, music.

First, Canton: Oct. 20-23; Sunday, 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., noon and 7 p.m.; Dean Register, Hattiesburg, evangelist; Graham Smith, Clinton, music; Bill Hurt, pastor.

First, Byhalia: Oct. 27-Nov. 1; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; Don Stanfill, director of missions, Marshall/Lafayette, evan-

gelist; Shane Price, Booneville, music; Glenn E. Bien, pastor.

Crooked Creek, Silver Creek: Nov. 3-8; Sunday, 6 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Bill Hudson, Bogue Chitto, evangelist; Larry Davis, Crooked Creek Church, music; Mike Grenn, pastor.

Fellowship, Taylorsville: Nov. 10-13; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Ricky Gray, Flowood, evangelist; Jerry Peagler, Raleigh, music; Glen W. Smith, pastor.

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Listening and obeying

By Jim Phillips
Jeremiah 28: 5-14

Around many a church I have preached in or visited, there is somewhere to be found a familiar picture. You've seen it. It's where Jesus is standing before a door in which no door knob is located on the outside. The inscription reads, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). For years I was brought up to believe that that door was the door of the heart of an unbeliever, who from the inside must open the door of his or her heart for Jesus to come in. It makes for good preaching; however, that isn't the context of the passage. The door is the door of the church where Jesus is calling from the outside, desiring to come inside and heal, and bless and teach. Though the church certainly was familiar with the voice, they were choosing not to listen. Could that not be a parable of our day too?

Ezekiel was just such a voice. He was called of God to speak to God's own people who were refusing to listen to his message (2:4). He was instructed by God to be faithful to proclaiming God's truths regardless of the people's response. What God wanted was boldness, what the people wanted was timidity. I heard about a preacher once who was asked to resign because the people thought when he talked against sin that he was always thinking of them!

Parents, teachers and preachers often have a common audience. We have a message of truth and security but many times our listeners consider our words a threat to their lifestyles. Ezekiel certainly sensed this from Israel. In fact, God described them as impudent children and stiffhearted (v. 4). What Ezekiel had to confront in his own heart was whether he wanted to be true to God's revelation or whether he wanted to be favored by the people. Many times the choice is the same for Christians. God told him that even in such an unfriendly environment, be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks (v. 6). Perhaps a New Testament comparison would be, "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7).

God hinted to Ezekiel that an easier audience existed that would be more favorably intent on listening to his message, but he wanted him to speak to the children of Israel (3:4-7). It's tempting isn't it when the going gets tough to step back and seek an easier path of resistance? It's tough trying to share your faith with the office bully or with a member of your own family. It would be a lot easier to go and find a seven year old somewhere that just got caught stealing a neighbor's football than to face up to a friend who got caught cheating on his wife. God's truths still remain God's truths. When we've heard that truth we're to be responsive in telling it completely and openly.

Because Ezekiel was willing to be used of God, the Lord comforted him with the thought that the tougher his listeners got, the more resilient God would make him (vv8-9). If we are so committed to be representatives of God's Word, I'm convinced that he will make us all we need to be effective for the Kingdom. In order to be effective, we must stay in tune with the Spirit and the Word and be just as vigilant to proclaim truth with an unwillingness to compromise.

Inside the cover of my Bible are the words, "Tough Skin-Soft Heart." This is to keep me ever aware that though I may feel as though my words for the Lord are only falling on stone hearts, to be really effective, I must remain tender on the inside to communicate wisely.

Our call is like Ezekiel's in that God requires obedience to what we know to be his truth. We're not only to live it ourselves, but be willing to tell it too. However, always keep in mind what God told him, speak what you know to be the truth, "...whether they listen or fail to listen". We're not held accountable for another's response to our message, only that we've been faithful to what God says.

Phillips is pastor, North Greenwood Church, Greenwood.

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The person who is blessed

By Ronald Bishop
Matthew 3:4

Matthew five opens the three-chapter section often called the Sermon on the Mount. The chapter begins with another section that is a favorite to many, the Beatitudes. "Beatitude" comes from the Latin word often translated "happy" or "blessed." It is the word used at the beginning of each of the Beatitudes in the Latin versions of Matthew.

Jesus looked out upon the crowd that was following him and knew that if everyone would hear him, he must climb up onto the side of the mountain. There he sat with his disciples and taught the crowd what follows in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus wanted to impress upon his followers that one can attain a state of "blessedness" by careful concentration on attitudes and actions. Contrary to popular opinion, money, power, and luxury did not bring happiness to people in Jesus' time, nor do they now. Jesus prescribed something else for the attainment of blessedness.

"Poor in spirit" refers to people who recognize their spiritual needs. Only those people will do something about their spiritual poverty. They will receive the kingdom of heaven.

"Those who mourn" probably is a reference to sorrow concerning personal sin and failure as well as the sin of others that seems to be so rampant in every generation. Those who grieve over sin as Habakkuk did will eventually be comforted.

"The meek" have a quality that is necessary for spiritual maturity. They are not overly assertive and do not insist on having their way. They have self-confidence, but they do not always have to demonstrate it. It is these that, despite their refusal to depend upon power and force, will in fact inherit the earth.

"Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness" probably are not dieters. Rather, they sincerely desire to make righteousness a part of their lives. Many people half-heartedly desire righteousness. Those who make it a focus of their lives will have their desire met. They will be filled with righteousness. This is no easy road, but one full of reward to the diligent.

"The merciful" refer to people who are genuinely kind-hearted and full of compassion for others. It is easy to want God's mercy and at the same time refuse to offer mercy. Jesus demands that his followers be merciful. Paul commanded that Christians "forgive as Christ forgave you." Those who have learned to show mercy are the ones who will receive mercy.

"The pure in heart" probably are people with single-minded purpose and pure motives. They are not easily sidetracked or deflected from their purpose. Their reasons for desiring a relationship with God are not selfish or against the better interests of others. It is these who will see God. Jesus warned that those who use religion as a stepping-stone to achieve some other goal will be disappointed in the end.

"The peacemakers" are those who actively participate in reconciliation rather than causing conflict. There are those who seem to love strife. They thrive on being at the center of confusion. Others truly desire to make peace and see contentment among people. These are truly children of God.

People who are "persecuted because of their righteousness" refers to people who persevere despite what others think of them. They will be given the kingdom.

Jesus reminded his followers that they are the "cream of the crop" of humanity. There are tasks that will go undone if Jesus' followers do not do them. Though many of the people Jesus described in the Beatitudes suffer greatly in this life, they will be rewarded for their character and their actions.

Bishop teaches philosophy and religion at Jones County Junior College, Ellisville.

Life and Work



By Cynthia Douglas

Ex. 20; Ps. 100; Jer. 2; Luke 10

What are some contemporary forms of idolatry? Can religion and various church activities be idolatry? Yes — God says any activity or allegiance which comes before our worship of him and our intimate fellowship with him is idolatry. The first commandment says to worship only the true God and the second commandment says not to worship the true God in the wrong way.

Nothing you can make is God (Ex. 20:4-6). The people of Israel truly loved God. However, because God is unseen, they soon desired an object to worship. As a result, they made the golden calf. Soon they learned the bitter lesson that idolatry brings spiritual and physical destruction to God's people.

When anyone or anything takes the foremost place in our life, the place of honor which God deserves, then idolatry has occurred. When we make the means of something become the end of our worship, then we have idolatry. This can be true with money, marriage, church, even our relationship to God's Word. Verse 5 says God is a "jealous God" which means he desires our love for him to be pure. Our relationship to God will affect the generations to come.

Few of us are tempted to make actual idols to worship. But some of us are guilty of shaping God into an image which we desire him to be. We give our best efforts to the care of our physical bodies, careers, or recreation. The danger of idolatry in 1996 is real. Remember, God forbids all forms of idolatry.

No created thing is God (Deut. 4:19). In Deuteronomy 4, God speaks to the people of Israel concerning the seriousness of obeying His laws. Moses, speaking for God, warns against idolatry saying it is a sin directly against God. Most idols exist in our hearts, they are not objects we make. Remember God knows that what we love most becomes a god to us.

In the verses preceding 19, Moses cautioned the people not to make an idol of anything God has created such as objects of nature, or even people. No created thing is God! God is the creator and desires for all creation to worship and praise him. Material things are to be used, not worshiped. Genesis 1:26 states creation was made for man, but only man was made to have a personal, spiritual relationship with God.

Religious trappings are not God (Jer. 7:12-15). When a person confines their worship of God to a certain place or a certain time, they risk their relationship with God. In these verses, Jeremiah reminded the people of what God did in Shiloh. Shiloh had been the site of the ark and the tabernacle. Also at Shiloh, the Israelites had practiced idolatry. As a result, the ark was captured by the Philistines, and soon afterwards, Shiloh was destroyed by the Philistines. Jeremiah said the people had now placed their faith in the temple rather than in God.

God's Word teaches us to worship God as the one and only God at all times. Life cannot be put into unrelated segments such as work, marriage, home, church, and worship. All of life is God's and should be devoted to him. Religious trappings are not God - only the loving and just God is worthy of our praise and love. God allows no substitutes for His reign in the hearts of people.

Jesus is God (Col. 1:15;2:9). Colossians 1:15 affirms Jesus as the image of the invisible God and the firstborn over all creation. Jesus is the complete revelation of God, he is God. Verse 9 also confirms the deity of Jesus as being God in the bodily form. Jesus is supreme over everything. As we come to know Jesus Christ, we also know God.

Am I guilty of idolatry? Do I affirm Christ as the full image of God? God forbids all forms of idolatry. Therefore, we need to be constantly evaluating our lives and how they relate to God. No one nor anything should have a greater influence in our life than God. He allows no substitutes for the complete worship of him!

Douglas is a member of First Church, Columbus.

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Mr. & Mrs. Charles D. Little
Mr. Marvin Sisco
Wellman Baptist Church
Mrs. Agnes Geneva Slay
Mr. & Mrs. Danny Tavares III
Liz Mrs. Slaydon
Mr. & Mrs. Lon D. Pepper Sr.
Michael Tucker

Rebecca Tanner - Child Care Worker, Mike Crocker - Unit Director for CDC and South MS, Johnny Headrick - Child Care Worker, Dickerson Place, Bo Catlett - grounds, and Warren Dykes - Child Care Worker practise CPR techniques learned in workshop.

BCV Staff receive CPR instruction from Chip Price - CPR certified instructor and counselor at the Village

capsules

ARSON FUND DISBURSEMENT TO STATES NEARS \$650,000: NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Missouri and California became the 16th and 17th state conventions to receive funds from the Southern Baptist Convention's "Arson Fund" with the distribution of an additional \$179,020 Oct. 4, bringing the total to \$649,965. In addition to the monies, Southern Baptist construction crews are volunteering to rebuild the burned churches. At least four state Baptist conventions have sent crews to churches in need and the SBC Brotherhood Commission is attempting to contact each of the fire-damaged congregations to assess the level of need. Donations to the SBC Arson Fund may be sent directly to state Baptist convention offices (Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530), or the SBC Executive Committee, 901 Commerce St., Nashville, TN 37203.

TRENDS EXPERT'S BOOK CITES 'TRUE LOVE WAITS': NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Being a virgin is "turning into a badge of pride," nationally known trends analyst Faith Popcorn has written in her book "Clicking," in which she references the Southern Baptist-led teenage sexual abstinence campaign, "True Love Waits." Popcorn cites research indicating the percentage of 20-year-old men who have never had sex is greater today. She said chastity generally nets respect rather than ridicule. She calls the signing of True Love Waits pledge cards "a new Click for Teens," adding in parentheses, "could this be the start of a shift away from the enormous number of unwanted pregnancies?"

BSSB NAMES MATHIS DIRECTOR OF PASTOR-STAFF LEADERSHIP: NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Don R. Mathis, pastor of Central Church, Winchester, Ky., since 1994, has been named director of the Baptist Sunday School Board's Pastor-Staff Leadership Department, effective Nov. 1. The Pastor-Staff Leadership Department is responsible for resources and services for the personal and professional development of pastors and other ministry staff persons.

MARTIN KING TO RETURN TO HOME MISSION BOARD: ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — Martin King, vice president for institutional advancement at Midwestern Seminary, will return to the Home Mission Board Oct. 28 as director of news services and public relations. King served in a similar role at the Home Mission Board for three years before being elected to the Midwestern position last October. King has worked in various media positions since 1969, including broadcast journalism, hospital public relations, and advertising.

FERRELL FOSTER NAMED EDITOR OF ILLINOIS BAPTIST JOURNAL: SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP) — Ferrell Foster has been named editor of the "Illinois Baptist" newsmagazine and director of Illinois Baptist State Association's Communications Department, according to IBSA Executive Director Bob Wiley. Foster, 41, had been serving as the department's acting director since March 1, when former director Bill Webb became editor of Missouri's "Word and Way" newsmagazine.

Anti-Christian tone noted in many near-death books

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — Interest in near-death experiences (NDE) waned after sales of Raymond Moody's "Life After Life" slowed.

It revived in recent years with the publication of "Embraced By The Light," Betty Eadie's near-death experience account that has sold more than 4 million copies.

That disturbs veteran cult watcher Richard Abanes, who says neither Moody nor Eadie is a Christian.

Abanes is the author of a new book, "Journey Into the Light: Exploring Near Death Experiences."

Abanes said he wrote the book because much of the near-death genre has an anti-Christian flavor.

The 10 best-selling near-death experience books take an anti-Christian, New Age or occultic view of the afterlife, he said.

Wayne Oates, former professor at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and the University of Louisville, agreed with Abanes about the New Age influence behind near-death experiences' popularity.

From an empirical point of view, he said, there are psychiatric reasons for NDEs. He termed them "hypnagogic" — a half-waking, half-sleeping state that many have experienced outside of near-death situations.

"I know the average person who has had such an experience would not accept that," he said.

"They feel it was total reality. Surgical patients have had these experiences, because they're not as thoroughly asleep as the anesthesiologist thinks they are," he said.

However, Oates said he doesn't want to downgrade those who have been through a near-death encounter.

Such experiences have led some to alter their lives significantly, he said, such as giving up alcohol or finding comfort in knowing a loved one who died is now safe in God's hands.

"It's an article of faith and I'm not going to talk them out of it," he said.

"But I would ask: How they are different and what are the results of their experience?" he asked.

Researcher says... Reports of near-death events must be balanced with Bible

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — When Stella Jarboe checked into the hospital last fall with severe pneumonia, she felt so bad she wanted to die.

Her doctors believed she would soon get her wish. Wires sprouted from her body. A yellowish substance clogged her lungs. Her two daughters maintained a 24-hour bedside vigil.

The 82-year-old Louisville, Ky., woman remembers little of the first two days of her three-week stay at Baptist East Hospital, except the vision that remains so vivid she tells others about it constantly.

Jarboe said she was standing in a big open space. Then, as if a movie were flashing in front of her, she saw a line with people standing on it. Most of the faces belonged to members of her family, including her five sisters and two brothers.

Suddenly a sister who had died in 1981 and a late brother, who would have been 100, appeared beside her. Each took an arm in their hands.

"Oh, is this the way Jesus does things?" Stella asked. "He sends loved ones that have died and gone to heaven back after the other ones?"

"Yes," her sister replied.

"I'm not afraid. Let's go. I'm ready," Stella said.

As Stella raised her foot to cross the line, a sweet, yet commanding man's voice sounded from behind, "No, not yet. You've got some extended time."

Believing the voice must be Christ's, Jarboe turned to look. Nobody was there. When she turned around, her brother and sister had vanished. The next thing she recalls is lying in her hospital bed.

At first, the retired nurses' aide didn't talk much about it.

She was afraid others would think she was nuts, although she is a born-again Christian who once taught Sunday School for 38 years.

Today, that reticence is gone.

"I've had dreams before and this wasn't a dream," said the member of Clifton Church. "I know this was the Lord speaking to me, because he and I are good friends."

Twenty-five years ago, Jarboe might have drawn strange glances for her account. But that was before near-death experiences became a popular phenomenon.

A 1990 Gallup Poll reported 12% of adult respondents said they had survived a near-death experience. If representative of all U.S. adults, more than 22 million Americans claim to have encountered such incidents.

Raymond Moody's 1975 book, "Life After Life," detailed 50 near-death experiences and sold more than 12 million copies.

Although he has been criticized as anti-Christian, Moody's writings are credited with launching widespread interest in the topic.

The wave of interest also spurred the creation of the International Association for Near-Death Experiences.

The group, also criticized by some Christian researchers, reportedly has several thousand members in the United States and branches in a dozen foreign nations.

While Stella Jarboe's pastor doesn't discount the validity of her experience, researcher Jim Holladay cautions that Christians must test any experience against the truth of Scripture and Jesus as he is revealed in the Bible.

Holladay said it is impossible to know whether Christians will enter heaven in the way Jarboe described.

The crucial element of her experience is the positive impact it made on her life, Holladay said.

"I wouldn't deny that God tries to communicate hope to us in a variety of ways when we're inclined to give up," he said. "Whatever happened was so spiritually powerful that she has a reason for being here. It has motivated her to be of service to ministry and the church."

Jarboe said she's not certain why she survived the sickness, but one reason has been suggested by the sick and shut-ins she calls regularly.

They tell her she encourages them tremendously and have suggested that is her purpose for living, she said.

She added no matter how long she remains on earth she will not fear death.

"When I pray at night, I say, 'Lord, if you come and get me tonight, I know I'll be with you forever.' If I die tonight I've had a wonderful life, even with its ups and downs," she said.

The fascinating accounts make it easy to understand why near-death experiences attract such attention.

In his book, "Caught Up Into Paradise," evangelical Christian Richard Eby wrote of falling off a balcony and splitting his head open.

He wrote that before doctors resuscitated him, he saw heaven awash with beautiful sights and sounds and communication with God on a mind-to-mind level.

Others have told of bright lights, pleasurable sensations and out-of-body visions.

Among them is Phyllis Tickle, editor-at-large for Publishers Weekly. For many years, she served as religion editor of the New York-based trade publication.

About 40 years ago, she received the wrong drug to prevent a miscarriage and stopped breathing.

Although revived in an ambulance, she relapsed in the hospital.

She recalled watching doctors operate on her amidst bright lights, with music in the background.

She wanted to depart for this other world, but said she realized she couldn't leave her husband of 18 months and decided to return.

"It's like a conversion experience," Tickle said.

"It forms every thought thereafter. It's not something you can hide or fake. But I couldn't find anyone who wanted to talk about it back then. As the spiritual movement has grown, it has become more acceptable to talk about subjective experience," she said.

Bibliocipher

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K MSTFT RZHS TSGV PKGS ZGYSU VQ VSTVKNC FGVQ

CQF VRSTS VRKGYT KG VRS WRFDWRST. K ZP VRS

DQOV ZGA VRS QNNTBDKGY QN AZHKA, ZGA VRS

ODKYRV ZGA PQDGKGY TVZD.

DSHSUZVKQG VLSGVC-VLQ: TKIVSSG

Clue: P equals M

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last weeks puzzle: Mark Nine Twenty-Four.

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